



# The Creative Woman

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PIECING THE QUILT:  
Women on the American Frontier





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## RECOVERING THE STORIES OF OKLAHOMA WOMEN

by Barbara Hillyer Davis



The first venture of a university class into local history and literature is made with the hope of significant discoveries, literature of high quality, new historical records. When I began such a venture with a group of Oklahoma students, we made no such dramatic discoveries; we were able to recover only fragments of information and documents of uncertain or poor literary quality. However, from these unimpressive materials we learned much about history and literature and the region--not how to impress with our discoveries, but how to tell and listen to stories, how to read and write and think carefully and well.

My 1977-78 course at the University of Oklahoma produced research papers and public programs designed to share with people outside the classroom what we had learned about Oklahoma women. The products of the seminar are still available for research in the field or to satisfy a casual interest in

the subject. The research papers were deposited in the Western History Collection of the University Library, and the photographic exhibit and three booklets (part of our public programming) are circulated by the Women's Studies Program. (1)

These products of the year's work are "pieced" from fragments collected from old books and newspapers, interviews and the reports of interviews. Our resources were seldom complete; none of them alone told us much either about women or about the region. Our real learning came instead from the effort to construct, from these fragments, a pattern that would at least suggest to others the richness of the fabric of women's culture from which they were torn.

Even my own preparation was sketchy--having only learned in July that I would be teaching the course beginning in September. This lack of time had conspicuous effects on the materials with which we began our research. It necessitated a selection of textbooks assembled from a quick survey of in-print paperbacks on women's history, southern or western history, and women's writings and, an equally hasty accumulation of three manila folders full of miscellaneous newspaper clippings on Oklahoma women. Both the book selection process and the contents of the clipping files came to represent for me the enormous variety and the frustrating over-simplification of our resources on Oklahoma women.

For textbooks we had many choices of literary and other works on southern or western experience, but only two were focused on Oklahoma. One of the two, Angie Debo's Prairie City, (2) was out of print and the other, Edna Ferber's Cimarron, (3) I chose not to use because of some criticism that I hadn't time to evaluate.

Supposedly, Oklahomans considered Cimarron an inaccurate presentation of their state's past and complained that Ferber spent only a short time here to do research, and therefore



failed to understand the character of our collective experience. Without adequate time to evaluate this criticism, I didn't use the novel as a text. The story about its historical accuracy, however, became for me a useful example of the way we have failed to develop analytic tools for literary forms like Ferber's which deliberately avoid being either regional history or "canonized" literature. Cimarron is described as regional literature on one hand and criticized on the other as being inaccurate regional history. It can be described also as historical fiction, a genre often assumed to be inferior to both history and fiction.

But the women I know who have researched Oklahoma women's history and have some experience in Oklahoma politics think that Cimarron effectively presents a woman's quite mixed experience of Oklahoma as a place where ordinary lives and politics intersect. Ferber's brief research trip provided her with a lot of anecdotal information about everyday life in frontier Oklahoma which she presented in fictional form.

The story about Ferber's historical inaccuracy and her short research trip was so widely circulated (I heard it from librarians and history students as well as people who remembered its being mentioned in high school classes) that it suggests an oral tradition about the self-concept of Oklahomans. The negative judgment that clearly emerges includes an element of sexism (Cimarron is about a woman and a weak man, about transplanting other cultures, including "feminine" cultures, on the masculine frontier) and a regional bias (Oklahoma culture is presented as extremely limited). There is an academic bias as well, a rigid departmental division between history and literature which assumes that either may and probably will contaminate the other. It took a little more time and experience before we could abandon such distinctions.

The files of newspaper clippings were crucial to the development of that experience. The miscellaneous entries in the "vertical files" of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries and the Oklahoma County Libraries were mostly lists of prominent women, with a few feature stories from women's pages and the Oklahoman's Sunday supplement, Orbit.

These clippings suggested some subjects for research; historians and archivists we consulted suggested others. Both kinds of lists were developed almost at random. As the research projects developed, we found that the randomness and the kinds of information we were able to recover were both a result of the characteristic method by which the stories of Oklahoma women have been collected: an interview by a collector of stories, either "historical" or "journalistic." Moreover, there was a circular pattern in our pursuit of certain stories: the journalists (especially of the Sunday supplement stories) often did their research in the Western History Collection--our primary archival resource, where the usual resource was a collection of oral history interviews conducted in the 1930's as a part of a WPA project, the Indian-Pioneer Papers. Both interviewers and researchers wanted to record the memories of people who settled Oklahoma less than a century ago. In neither case is the interviewing designed as oral historians of our day might design it, now that they have acquired a concept of themselves as specialists. The result for women's history and literature is fortunate, because the interview subjects were not encouraged to focus on political or economic history, for example. Instead they were encouraged to remember ordinary episodes out of everyday life in those extraordinary times. But unfortunately, tantalizing hints about our grandmothers' lives are shut off by interviewers' lack of interest in those questions about women's culture which are the new province of Women's Studies.

The process we went through was similar to that used a year before we began our work, by the women who produced the television series, Women's Place in Oklahoma. (Episodes in this series became in turn, another of our basic resources.) They had collected information from a number of printed historic and literary sources on Oklahoma to use as a basis for interviewing Oklahoma women in the television programs. The background papers developed by scholars in the humanities (4) were used to formulate questions for the interviews. But the real interviews developed as stories the subject wanted to tell the interviewer, and those stories are in fact the memorable parts of the series. The blending of two forms, historical perspective and personal memoir is most vivid in the opening interviews of "Pioneering Women" in which Phoebe McClung and Angie Debo remember their pioneer childhood. Angie Debo is an historian and a professional writer who had already selected her stories for dramatic impact and relationship to historical events--drought and recession for example. She tells of the year people in Stillwater had turnips in their Christmas stockings and illustrates "prairie madness" with the woman who wanted to serve guests a "chicken" at a time when no one had much food; the chicken was her baby. McClung, who doesn't have Debo's historical perspective, is preoccupied with her present situation--she is being moved out of her family home because of a highway construction project. The most affecting revelation of her pioneer past is not a directly presented memory but a comment on the relationship between the present crisis and a memory of her past: the trees surrounding her old home are too big to move. Leaving them is painful; to survive on the prairie, they had to be lovingly tended, watered by bucketsful carried long distances. Now she is planting new trees and hopes to live until they give shade. This program combines the characteristics of many of our resource materials.

Both stories are told by articulate women who remember the past, though one analyzes the experience and supplements it from other sources, while the other merely lives it. The stories represent an oral tradition, the handing down of memories from the hard times of the past. The filmed interviews themselves are another tradition, the interview of old people because they are old.

The surest way for a woman to be chosen as subject for an interview is to live to be eighty or over, or in some way be a "star"--the first woman to do something or an exceptional leader in a field. Angie Debo is both: a notable historian of her own region who also lived through its dramatic "founding" period to become an old woman. But Phoebe McClung is in many ways a more typical subject. Again and again we read feature stories and oral history transcriptions of interviews with quite ordinary women and men who remember at 85 and 90 what everyday life was like in their childhood. In Oklahoma many of these stories are dramatic (the cow fell through the dugout roof, (5) the baby played peek-a-boo with a rattlesnake (6) ). From our perspective as women interested in women's emotional as well as physical survival, some are especially poignant. Nora Watson Cox tells of how her mother hid lilac cuttings in the wagon for the trip to the Lawton area; her father repeatedly threw them out and Mother repeatedly sneaked them back in. When they finally reached Lawton and Father "removed that long string of stove pipe from the side, out fell the beloved shrubs. Even now the lilacs bloom in the springtime in the front yard of the old homestead." (7) We are, after all, very close to the frontier, and we expect our oldest citizens to remember the land run or the water wagon or the first automobile, to tell us the story that explains the lilacs in the front yard of the old homestead.



Some of the stories tell us how the eighty-eight-year old woman lives today, and what her house is like, or about her community activities(8)--not especially interesting as "pioneer" information. But when their mothers kept house in tents or dugouts, their experiences were commonplace, just as the daughter's apartment or suburban garden is commonplace today. In the 1930s when the interviews for the Indian-Pioneer Papers were collected, the "old people" interviewed were ordinary people who were subjects of the project simply because they could remember what ordinary people did in the extraordinary years surrounding the "runs." (9) So my students began to see that their own ordinary lives might one day be the subject of interviews.

The very fact that women's history has been so often ignored, misclassified, or misinterpreted proceeds directly from the fact that their lives were defined as "private" and usually "unimportant," characteristics of students' lives as well. As the student gains respect for the validity of her research materials, she gains self-respect as well and a much more finely-tuned awareness of the relationship between present and past. This is "relevance" far from superficial or sentimental, because the historian's method (when it is not male-biased) provides the intellectual framework for testing stereotypes against reality, while the methods of literary criticism sharpen our awareness of style and tone.

Angie Debo's example was particularly useful to us here. Her memory of an Oklahoma that we can experience only vicariously enriches for us that past and our present, because it is presented in two ways at once: as something she and others she knows have experienced pragmatically, day to day, and as information susceptible to analysis and categorization. She does not treat these two ways of perceiving the past as mutually exclusive. Explaining the effectiveness of Edward Everett Dale's teaching, she said that "his life and work were all of a

piece." (10) It is an ideal which she treasures and wishes to achieve. Committed to the idea that physical geography affects the inhabitants of a place, she clearly sets historical events in their regional context. The integration of ordinary lives and political history was eventually expressed in a new form in Debo's Prairie City, The Story of an American Community, a work which is both fiction and history, literature and investigative reporting--and judged as all of these or none by critics who were confused by the blend.(11) The book is the story of a town like Marshall, Oklahoma, Debo's home town, in the context of early twentieth century national and regional history. Debo builds our understanding of the town on the organized presentation of cumulative detail from ordinary lives, as well as the political context of these lives. The fictional treatment enables her to develop coherent characters out of the fragmentary stories of many ordinary individuals. In this, it is like Cimarron, a work which combines images and commonplace activities to recreate the atmosphere of a particular past place and time.

That Prairie City and Cimarron (two works which fictionalize history and then have been criticized for being less than perfectly accurate as history) were our best resources, helps to explain one of the strengths of our seminar. We didn't have enough purely historic or purely literary resources to permit easy distinctions between the two.

The economic and demographic studies which will eventually support traditional courses on the history of women in the West have just begun. On the other hand, I could not have taught a traditional literature course on women writers in Oklahoma, not because there are none (there are plenty) but because the known women's writings, besides being out of print, are mostly in forms considered somehow less than "literary" (diaries, letters, interviews), of poor quality (local poets, private writings), of

only minor and local importance (locally printed books and especially feature stories from the media). We had therefore, to begin at a simpler level: to use the methods of both history and literature as we tried to discover everything that could be learned from available spoken and written materials. Above all, we tried to listen to the individual voices.

The result was an appreciation not only of those individual voices but also of our own. This realization very plainly came from the "popular" nature of much of the material, especially the interviews by journalists and others. When we asked questions about historical context, characterization, the personality of the interviewer and about the nature of the implied audience, we were able to classify the research data and information from our own lives as Oklahoma women in the same system.

Again, the "Pioneering Women" program from Women's Place in Oklahoma was a model for our integration of research materials and our own experience. In that broadcast, Angie Debo's ability as an historian to generalize and place the individual experience within the context of others like it enriches our understanding of Phoebe McClung's experience. But the producers of the television broadcast take another step and add interviews with other kinds of pioneering women: Ada Sipuel Fisher, the black woman who integrated the University of Oklahoma law school, and Jerrie Cobb, Oklahoma City aviator. These exceptional women are linked by the placement of their interviews with the ordinary lives of such pioneers as McClung's and Debo's mothers.

When we considered the importance to newspaper and television audiences of the ordinary older woman's recollection of her mother's kitchen and field work, and of its relationship to the more unusual work of "exceptional" women, it occurred to us that our own,

younger memories will one day be appropriate for such interviews. They too are related to the exceptional women's lives and to "historical" events. We began, therefore, to place our own everyday experiences alongside those we were finding in feature stories and tape transcriptions. We evolved our own "features" which eventually became booklets, exhibits, papers for the archives. Instead of being a private matter between teacher and student which ended in a grade, the student research became something to be shared with others: other students, the family of the research subject, participants in conferences and even, coming full circle from our beginnings, the readers of the Sunday women's pages.

In all cases, we developed new blends of individual experience and documentable research. In the public presentations, we sought new forms and found ourselves not only classifying, generalizing, synthesizing but also eliminating some details and stressing others--doing, in fact, what the interviewers we studied had done. We collected the stories of Oklahoma women (becoming interviewers ourselves in the process), organized them, and gave back as many as we could. We returned them to a public which may use them as a beginning for further research; if they do, no doubt they will be frustrated by what we have not done or said. We are continually rearranging the collection of historical scraps, adding to it, and putting some scraps back in the bag--piecing a quilt in the form of our photographic exhibit, our papers, our booklets. There are always rich scraps left to be worked with.

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#### FOOTNOTES

1. Oklahoma Women, A Collection of Research Papers, Norman: University of Oklahoma Women's Studies Program, 1978. The collection includes papers on Indian women of the Western Plains tribes by Andrea Weiss, Jan



Painter-Somermeyer and Debra Parker; on Perle Mesta by Janet Noever; on Suffrage by Gayle Barrett; on Angie Debo by Jane Taylor; on Beulah Trammel by Linda Posada; and on settlers and military families by Barbara McQuitty.

The photographic exhibit, Buffalo Chips to Senate Seats, Women at Work in Oklahoma, is published by Oklahoma Women's Studies Program.

Oklahoma Women Re-membering, Norman: University of Oklahoma Women's Studies Program is a collection of student comments on the group process.

Jane Taylor and Cynthia Zimmerman, The Uncommon Latitude: Defining Place and Potential, Norman: University of Oklahoma Women's Studies Program, deals with one of the seminar's emphases, sense of place.

2. Angie Debo, Prairie City, the Story of an American Community, N.Y., A.A. Knopf, 1944.
3. Edna Ferber, Cimarron. Greenwich, Conn., Fawcett, 1958.
4. The series was funded in part by the Oklahoma Humanities Committee and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Video tapes are available.
5. "Women's World: Farewell to a Calico Legend", loc. cit.
6. Wayne Morgan & Anne Hodges Morgan, Oklahoma: A Bicentennial History, N.Y. W.W. Norton & Co., 1977.
7. Nora Watson Cox, 'Neath August Sun, Lawton Business and Professional Women's Club, 1934, p. 126.
8. See, for example, "Irrepressible Grandma," in The Oklahomans, Sunday Magazine of The Sunday Oklahoman, November 12, 1978, based on interview of Viola Thompson.

9. Index of first 12 volumes of the Indian-Pioneer Papers available in University of Oklahoma Western History Collection. The Indian-Pioneer Papers are in Western History Collection and Oklahoma Historical Society.
10. Angie Debo, "the teacher," in Frontier Historian, Arrel M. Gibson, ed., Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975, p. 21.
11. The critical response is summarized by Jane Taylor, "Angie Debo: An Artery to Our Past," in Oklahoma Women: A Collection Of Research Papers, pp. 86-87.





## MEMORIES OF A GREAT AUNT

by Lillian Clark Canzler

When I look back on my formative years, one person stands out as a real influence on my thinking, on my humor development, and perhaps on my attitudes toward feminism. She was my great aunt on my father's side. Her maiden name was Caroline Starr. She married and became Caroline Atnip around 1880.

One of my earliest memories of Aunt Caroline is of the woman with two husbands. She came out West right after she and her best woman friend had each married. The two couples left Kansas to start new lives with their new husbands. They had a rough crossing of the plains, and her friend died asking Caroline to promise always to look after her husband. Thus Aunt Caroline was always accompanied by Uncle Maird and Mr. Bisbee. Mr. Bisbee didn't live with Aunt Caroline and Uncle Maird. He lived across the alley, but he never missed a meal at Caroline's house. Apparently it never occurred to him to release her from that promise. Then again, it probably never occurred to her to release herself either.

This tough trio settled in Twin Falls, Idaho when there was nothing there but dust and mud. They saved all of their money and worked hard to claim land under the homesteading act. They owned land in the new township and other land in the desert that surrounds the Snake River. Mr. Bisbee took pictures of the land and of the waterfalls that thundered just below the townsite.

Aunt Caroline and Uncle Maird built a wooden house on their new town lot, claiming enough land for another house for Mr. Bisbee and for gardens for the three to share.



*Uncle Maird on left and Aunt Caroline on right.*

I don't recall Aunt Caroline talking about feminism. But she did dress like a modern-day feminist--coveralls and a flannel shirt, men's shoes and men's hats. This was her work uniform. She was such a hard worker that my mother often commented on her being able to work circles around everyone. She worked so hard and was always so pleasant that it never occurred to us children that she was really getting old.

The depression days had a dramatic effect on her life and on her attitudes toward living. Before the depression hit, she and Uncle Maird had quite a bit of money saved in the bank. When the banks failed and all of their hard-earned money was gone, Aunt Caroline went screaming to the bank demanding that the money be returned. When the banks couldn't help her, she went to her lawyer. When it was clear that the lawyer wouldn't take her case, she went to her minister. Her minister said that she was possessed by the devil, and threw her out of the church. Her doctor couldn't help her. She was temporarily lost and unbalanced. Then she swore off bankers, lawyers, ministers, and doctors. She didn't buy downtown. She would make it on her own!

On her small lots she raised chickens and rabbits, and never wasted any parts of the animal. Quite often we were given the feet of a chicken as a toy. She took a hold of the lower leg and made each foot dance like a puppet.

She slaughtered and dressed all of her own animals, and one of my strangest memories is of Aunt Caroline cleaning the chickens. (My God, I can still smell those hot, wet feathers!) As she cleaned the chickens, she would pop the eyeballs into her mouth. She made blood puddings and blood sausages from the animals that were slaughtered, saving what most people would have wasted. From her chickens and rabbits she got meat, fat and fur. At Christmas Aunt Caroline would bake all kinds of German pastries and breads using the saved animal fats. At all times you could find a very special cookie in her cookie jar. This was a sugar cookie that had a cinnamon candy in the middle. Mr. Bisbee brought her the cinnamon candies.

I used to wonder, as a child, about Aunt Caroline's gardens. She had two, side-by-side that covered a full city plot. One was a vegetable garden and one was a flower garden. I was always curious about why she wasted so much space on flowers, when food was so scarce. Now that I am older, I understand about having some beauty, too. She was especially proud of her gigantic zinnias and gladioli. Of course they grew well because of all that rabbit and chicken manure.

She also raised a huge field of strawberries on her desert land, and planted every plant herself. Mr. Bisbee drove her to and from her field which bordered the Snake River canyon.

From her berry money she bought flour at the mill. Flour was packed in cloth bags. From these bags she made her Sunday dresses and aprons. She did all of her sewing by hand. Her dresses were always full-length as were her aprons. The only exceptions were

dresses given to her as a Christmas or birthday gift, often made on my mother's new Singer.

My Aunt Caroline was full of fun and laughter. We children always begged to take her with us camping. She was good at fishing, too. When she fished she explained her luck with all kinds of sayings, such as, "When the wind blows south, the fish has a sore mouth." She caught a lot of fish. I never caught any. She said it was because I didn't hold my mouth right.

My most vivid memory of Aunt Caroline is of her hands. They were tough and gnarled from all of that work. They were not like other women's hands. They were like my father's hands. The knuckles were very large. The nails were broad and flat. In the winter she would keep the stove going with chunks of coal in the living room burner and chunks of wood in the Monarch range. When she had to remove the cinders from the stove she would reach in with her bare hands, quickly snatching the unwanted piece from the fire and depositing it in the coal bucket. It always amazed me that she never burned her hands. When I think of Aunt Caroline's house, I think of that stove with Uncle Maird snoozing on one side and Mr. Bisbee on the other, and Aunt Caroline in the middle stoking the fire.

During the cold Idaho winters she kept her hands busy on a big quilting frame that took up most of the living room area. She made beautiful quilts of leftover scraps of material. Each of us had one made from the material scraps from the dresses made by my mother. She also saved wool scraps, and made heavy woolen quilts. They were so heavy they cut off your circulation if you slept under them. We used them for camping. We put down papers on the ground, then the woolen quilt. The quilts acted as a mattress and kept the cold from the ground from coming through.

Although she didn't demand much from her men, she did have some feminist



ways. For example, she would always introduce men and women as follows: "This is Laura and her man; This is Clara and her man." But I can't remember seeing my Aunt angry. She swore once in a while when she dropped a loaf of bread or an egg. She always swore in German, the language that was forbidden in front of children. She thought that it was funny when we English-speaking children began to swear in German. All the German that I know today I got from my Aunt Caroline.

One of my fondest memories of Aunt Caroline is of her bathroom. She didn't buy toilet paper. In those days each piece of fruit from California came packed with a piece of tissue paper which said "Sunkist" in indelible ink. She gathered the thrown-out Sunkist papers from the grocery stores and kept a large box in the bathroom. I loved the smell of the lemon papers, and never missed a chance to go into her bathroom. She laughed about all of our fannies being special--always Sunkist.

She never went to church. Sworn off was sworn off. However, it seemed that she had her own personal religion. She said grace at every meal, a prayer about how thankful she was for the good life that had been given to her. She lived to be 99 years of age and was always in good health. Uncle Maird lived to be 90 and Mr. Bisbee\* 96. She upheld her promise to the last.

Was she a feminist? I don't really know and it doesn't really matter, but I look back on our relationship fondly and believe that she was a driving force in my life and provided a model of independent thinking.

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\* Mr. Bisbee was a professional photographer. His picture of early Twin Falls can be seen in banks and other public buildings in that area.

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## CLARA

interviewed and edited by  
Bonnie Krause

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Gazing south from Bald Knob, the highest point in Union County, Illinois along the Ozark Ridge as it winds down into Kentucky, a double-backed deep blue hill rises in the distance: Atwood Mountain. And as one stands on a foggy morning above the blue mist drifting in the hollows and catching along the wooded slopes, the sound of creaking wagon wheels and plodding hooves seems to echo from the past.

"I was born a hundred years too late." Clara Powles Farmer, 77 years old, laments. "I wish I'd lived back then. I'd a loved to live in them wigwams and those old log houses. Why, I wouldn't had a worry in the world."

Clara is a descendant of a long line of early Southern Illinois settlers and was raised at the foot of Atwood Mountain. The words of this article, for the most part, are her own, as recorded and edited by this author.

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My father was Scotch Irish and a pilot on a government steamboat. Grandfather Brown was a general in the Civil War. But on the wrong side. Rebels. And General Brown owned two hundred slaves when Abraham Lincoln set them free and it broke him up. Grandmother's people came from Scotland and settled in Tennessee and were very wealthy. Grandmother got married in Kentucky and they ordered her clothes from England. Her saddle (they rode sidesaddle) had an ivory horn and her stick was ivory. She said 'My husband didn't have to furnish me anything. I had my trunk, trousseau, full of lindsey and linen and everything, enough for five years of clothing.'

Grandmother told me when the Yankees came through there they just destroyed

everything they had. She lost seven brothers in the Civil War. The last one went AWOL and tried to come in, tried to come back to mother and three sisters, and they shot him and nailed him to a tree. And they wouldn't let the sisters go get him for days. Then they went and took him down and wrapped him in a sheet and dug a hole and buried him. She said they had big feather beds and Yankees ripped 'em open. Turned a barrel of molasses over. Cruelty in Civil War. There was a lot of that done.

My mother was three-quarter Cherokee. She was the one who inherited down through the generations that old place out there. And everything down there was homesteaded. Her name was Amanda Tennessee. Now the word Amanda means white flower in Indian.



*Prairie Woman, from "A History of Prairie Women."*



She was a marksman that wouldn't stop. My father would go from our home place down there over in the sunk lands in Missouri and some places in Arkansas and hunt about six weeks. And she used to go with him and he used to say they killed their meat that they eat. And she used to say she'd see an old gobbler stick his head around a tree and she could shoot his eyes out. Oh, she was a marksman.

I got her eye...my dad would take us huntin'. Carry that old sack on my back. One time had a possum in there, it went walkin' up my back and I let it outa the sack and it got away. We hunted.

Sometimes we'd get way off, we'd get close to an old time apple tree and you'd get down in the leaves and it'd be cold weather and you'd get an apple and wipe it off. Or we'd find an ear a corn and when we stopped to rest and listen to the dogs, we'd parch that old corn in that fire. And we'd eat that parched corn. I'm an old timer.

Time went on and I moved away from the home place and settled over in a German settlement about three miles away. My children went through high school. All them years I hunted, I worked at the shoe factory and I always craved this big mountain, Atwood Mountain. A wealthy lady from Chicago came there and bought it, just come out there in the summer and go back to the city in the winter. But at the time she bought it I was livin' right down below in the home place and I would work for her; it was during the depression and them five dollar bills was somethin'. But I hunted. She died and I wrote her daughter and asked her if I could rent that place out there. She said yes. I went ahead and worked years at the shoe factory. Later I quit. And I hunted ginseng and roots and squirrels, hunted in there and I lived there twenty-three years.

Thirty-five years ago I was down below the place huntin' and I shot

a squirrel across the ravine and I could tell by the way it fell it wasn't dead. Any hunter knew that. So I walked slowly down and went over there and there was a tree lyin' across that had blown over and the roots were holdin' it up there and then it went on the ground. And I could see that little squirrel tail there and I reached under there, just gonna get him and I thought I'd tap him like that, not shoot it again, you don't do that. Oh...somethin' hit me there and I thought, there's a wasp nest there. I looked and I couldn't see any nest (sometimes wasps build under there) and I looked and there were two spots of blood. You can still see them places on my hand. I knew it was a snake bite.

At first I could see that snake and I run my gun barrel under there right quick, I didn't take the time to look for something else. And out he come and he was about thirty inches long, that old copperhead, he was gettin' right after me. I backed off and shot him. And then I took and put my little knife and put it in one of them places (they're crooked you know) and put it down and jerked it like that, split it. And I sweated a little while and I put it down and jerked it in the other one. I put my tourniquet on.

I have dentures; I pulled them out and put them in my jeans pocket and as I started for the house I sucked the blood out, sucked it all the way to the house.

When I got there I told my husband, I said, "Bob, turn the car around, I'm snake bit." Well, he began to get frightened and was half cryin'. I said, "Turn it around." We got down to the neighbor's place right at the foot of the hill. The man was out there, and I said, "Call my son, tell him I'm snake bit and to meet us in town."

Oh, you never saw such a hand, it kept me in the hospital eight days. Oh, I promised I'd quit huntin',

I wouldn't hunt anymore. Finally it got all right.

And one time I was over in one of those big hollows and I could smell a skunk so plain. And I thought, something has bothered him around here. I kept slipping up this little ravine and all at once a big hawk as big as I ever seen, lit on a dead big limb, just good shooting distance. So I just up and dropped him. Well, that thing spread out his wings and come down. And I still smelled that skunk. And I thought, that's the biggest wing spread on a hawk I ever seen. So I go up to this hawk and I pick him up. I hold him up like this and oh...that hawk had a hold of that skunk. Oh...sick. I got that stuff all over my hands and I commences getting sick. I had to go on home. I pulled all my clothes off in the little shed and went into the house nude because I couldn't take those things inside.

I've called turkeys, call 'em with my mouth. If that old gobbler hollers, I can bring him right to me; many a time I've called 'em. I've called quails right up too. Old red squirrels too, especially a male squirrel, he'd get right around on the side where you're at.

But I lived at Atwood Mountain twenty-three years and I hunted every year before I moved away. There's twenty-five shells in a box and I've killed twenty-three squirrels many a time, out of twenty-five. I killed 263 squirrels and I dug \$285 worth of ginseng and roots. I know every root there is that sells. Ginseng, golden seal, Little Bethlehem Star, Black root.

Now on my home place there's just a mound where it once stood. The government owns it. They tore our big farmhouse down. Oh, it was a beautiful place. Atwood Mountain, now that's my heart.

I'm a poetry fiend. There was the Dutch Creek Valley poet, he's been dead about twenty-five years. He

picked a mandolin and I do too. And he made up poems about everything and everybody. I knew him back in my young days. We played in a string band. I believe I'm the only one living.

We went around to parties and played. We'd play like "Someone's rockin' my sugar lump, Sugar lump a lassies too." We'd square dance and I used to call once in awhile. Played in that band for twenty years.

I've had three of my poems accepted for music, for songs, but you don't realize what it costs. I never had the money.

Did you ever have any kind of experience? Now God give me something, I know he had to give it to me. When I write them, these poems, they stay with me. This writing comes and if I go right then to write it'll just pour out. But if I fool around half a day it gets away.

Now I'm a great fisherman, I've fished since I was as big as that. Here's my fishin' prayer:

Lord grant me this one last wish  
In my sunset years just let me fish.  
Though I may not get one everytime  
With failing strength I cast my line.

But just let me sit there in the sun  
And watch my cork, to me, that's fun.  
Lord, grant me this one last wish  
Health and strength to sit and fish.

Now I don't ask for silver and gold  
Fame and power this old world holds  
But please give me this one last wish  
Just health and strength so I can fish.

And when I'm in your landing net  
Ready for that last long sleep  
Lord, I hope you find me  
Good enough to keep.





# the eaver

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My thread spins out in all directions,  
Stretches to the sky and the white-tailed comets,  
Digs into the ground and the segmented earthworms,  
Plays across the ocean and its rainbow-finned fishes;

My spool unwinds in old directions,  
Climbing in the mountains where the rivers have beginnings,  
Spanning to the deltas where the fresh meet salty endings,  
Tautened through the flatlands with the wheat and corn growing,  
Slackened on the desert sands with dry winds sighing;

My reel is cast in new directions,  
Corded in confinement with my ancient mothers,  
Strung into the gravesides of my long-dead fathers,  
Thrust into the bodies of my living brothers,  
Tangled with the hearts of my heartsick sisters  
weaving long lonely days from wool of their own.

My bobbin sends a strand deep down inside me,  
Twisted like a skein of unwound worsted,  
Shuttling its way through the warp of ideas,  
Patterning a weft of confusion and conclusions,  
Pulling all the ends from air and earth and water  
together in a pattern of irregular beauty.

Many plies are blended in a hank of yarn.  
A thousand will be mended before I'm gone.

Harriet P. (Marcus) Gross

## BLACK WOMEN OF THE WEST 1820-1920

by Addie Harris

"...Nobody ever help me into  
carriages or over mud puddles,  
or give me any best place.  
And ain't I a woman?"

"I have plowed and planted  
and gathered into barns, and  
no man could head me.  
And ain't I a woman?"

"I have born'd five children  
and seen them most all sold  
off into slavery and when I  
cried out with mother's grief,  
no one but Jesus hear.  
And, ain't I a woman?"

-Sojourner Truth

*Sojourner Truth, artist - Paul Collins  
from "Great Beautiful Black Women."*



Surprisingly enough, the real West wasn't populated only with white cowboys, Indian fighters, or the white Calamity Jane as portrayed by most Hollywood movies. Research of western literature reveals a great deal of information about the roles of white ranchers, settlers, mountain men, soldiers, white women and white female suffragists as well as Black cowboys, Black founders of towns, and even Black western military men. The experience of these groups in the settlement of the American West has received considerable attention from scholars in the last decade, but little of this literature addresses or deals with the Black woman. Wasn't she there too?

The Black women who came West faced the same trials and hard labor as white women, assuming male responsibilities and undertaking work that society had defined as men's work: pitching tents, driving, loading and unloading wagons and roping stray cattle on horseback. In addition,

Black women also contended with racism, slavery and social discrimination.(1)

During this period of westward movement, white America regarded Black people as inferior, classless and sexless. This lack of distinction between the Black sexes existed in every occupation and even extended to flogging and lynchings. Black women were not spared, although they were less vulnerable to mob violence than were their men.(2)

Black women who were employed as general housekeepers had to cook, wash, keep house, or care for children, working from sunup to sundown. Black women were much more likely to be confined to domestic service for years, continuing in it after marriage and motherhood. The Black women never seemed to escape having to prostitute her femininity and her sex through domestic service in white people's homes, shops, restaurants, office buildings and elsewhere. They were not respected for these things, but were demeaned by them. (3)



"The concentration of Black women in domestic service contrasted sharply with the occupational opportunities of white women throughout the West. The trend among white women was clearly away from domestic service into professions and retail sales and office work. Black women, on the other hand, remained a tiny fraction of white collar employees, while composing an increasing minority of domestic workers. That servant, laundress, dressmaker, and midwife were four of the leading occupations of western black women indicated both the low status and pay of their work, and its increasing obsolescence."(4)

Racial discrimination and the lack of educational skills generally limited the employment opportunities of Blacks in the West. Several western states and territories closed off educational opportunities for Blacks. While in other states laws passed in the 1850's and 1860's barred the admission of Blacks to white public schools and made little provision for separate ones.

The social restrictions of Jim Crow and Jane Crow that humiliated Black women and men have been well documented: On stagecoaches in Kansas and Colorado and streetcars in San Francisco, Black women were either denied public transit or forcibly ejected and left to fend for themselves.

"In 1861, Mary Randolph found herself evicted from a Denver-bound stagecoach because she was Black. She spent the night on the Kansas plains snapping her umbrella open and shut to scare off coyotes."(5)

Restaurants outside the Black community frequently refused to service Blacks, theaters refused them admission and recreation facilities were either closed to them or opened on a limited segregated basis.

Jane Crow was very much in evidence during the women's suffrage movement. Rosayln Terborg-Penn notes:

"Sojourner Truth was one of the few Black women noted by historians to have frequented women's rights conventions. She, however, was not always welcomed. Her narrative reveals that the white women at the Akron, Ohio, Women's Rights Convention in 1851 beseeched the chairman to forbid her to speak before the group. They felt she would ruin the movement by giving the public the impression that their cause was 'mixed with abolition and niggers.' In 1858, at an antislavery meeting in northern Indiana, members of the group demanded that she submit her breasts to inspection by the 'ladies' present to prove that she was not a man in disguise. The 'ladies' did not come to her defense, whereupon Sojourner rebuked them all and bared her breasts to the entire group." (6)

After the passage of the fifteenth amendment, suffrage leaders ignored the social injustices to Blacks, justifying their attitude by noting the need for southern support. Ida B. Wells was told by Susan B. Anthony that when the Equal Suffrage Association met in Atlanta, Georgia, a group of Black women asked her if she would come and help them in forming a branch of the Suffrage Association among the Black women. Miss Anthony said that she declined to help them because of the feeling of the South with regard to Black participation on equality with whites.

"The Western suffragists insisted that only the 'right women' be involved in the movement. The suffragists frequently justified enfranchising white women on the grounds that they deserved the vote more than some 'ignorant'

classes that already had it. Indians, Chinese, and Negroes were the most frequently referred to in this vein." (7)

"Black women seldom felt free from popular prejudice against dark skin. Occasionally such prejudice took ironic forms. When a white women's club in Oakland sponsored a talk by Booker T. Washington, most Black women were excluded because the white clubwomen 'did not desire the attendance of a large body of colored persons.'" (8)

The Black woman was subject to yet another form of discrimination--color prejudice from not only whites, but fellow Blacks. This was true in real life as well as fiction of the American West. The fiction of both Black and white authors point out this dilemma. Notable, James Fenimore Cooper's popular novel The Last of the Mohicans. Cooper's novel speaks not so much of color degrees, but of attitudes toward color. One of his major characters is Cora Munro, a mulatto, who is the elder daughter of Colonel Munro, a British aristocrat. Her mother was West Indian, where it was believed that she had African ancestry and had thus bequeathed to her daughter the curse of an inferior race.

Further in the novel, it is stated that Alice, a half-sister of Cora is young, beautiful, blue-eyed, blond haired, helpless and is particularly beloved by her father. Cora is beautiful, has black hair and brown eyes. She was no timid, shrinking, helpless being like her half-sister Alice, but a courageous, intelligent, serious-minded, unselfish and noble individual. Rightfully, Cora should have been the real heroine of The Last of the Mohicans but, being a mulatto Cooper doomed her to a tragic end. White Alice lived happily ever after. (9)

Wallace Thurman, a Black author, wrote the novel The Blacker the Berry. The story is of Emma Lou, a girl born

of a mulatto mother and a Black father. Emma Lou, much to her family's regret, resembles her father, and because she was too black she was an embarrassment to her grandmother who was a social leader among the mulatto blue-veins of Boise, Idaho. The "Blue-Veins" motto was whiter and whiter every generation.(10)

Degree of skin color was also a factor in determining the acceptability of Black women by white women. Light-skinned Black women appeared to have been preferred in white female groups.(11)

"Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

It's had tacks in it,  
And splinters  
And boards torn up,  
And places with no carpets on  
the floor--  
But all the time  
I's been a-climbin' on,  
And reachin' landin's,  
And turnin' corners,  
And sometimes goin' in the dark  
Where ther ain't been no light,

I's still climbin'  
And life for me ain't been no  
crystal stair." (12)

Although life was no "crystal stair", the Black women kept climbing on--she kept climbing--refusing to turn back.

Some Black women participated in western suffrage campaigns and political activities. Most frequently mentioned is Nabmi Anderson of Kansas, who was an official colored representative of the National American Woman's Suffrage Association in the West and played an active role in campaigns in Kansas in 1884 and in 1896. (13)

Black women did not accept discrimination in public places lying down.

"The earliest significant protests of Black women took the form of individual law suits during the 1860's against the denial of civil rights. In



California, a Black woman filed one of the first successful suits for the right to testify against a white person. Several Black women, including the celebrated Mary Ellen ("Mammy") Pleasant, were ejected from San Francisco streetcars and filed suits which eventually compelled the streetcar lines to allow Negroes to ride. In the late nineteenth century, several western states passed civil rights laws, and Black women used them to sue theaters for excluding them." (14)

The West did provide a few Black women with professional opportunities that were uncommon elsewhere. In the early twentieth century at least two western Black newspapers were edited by women.(15) Teachers comprised the elite of Black working women, although they were only teachers in Black schools. They were often paid less than white teachers; however, school teaching was one of the few careers open to them. Many Black teachers viewed Black school as "an opportunity to improve the education of their race." Kansas Blacks abandoned their fight for integrated schools in 1880 on the ground that the presence of "educated Black men and women... would greatly benefit their society as we excite a laudable emulation in our children." (16)

"Managing 'hotels' and running 'tensorial palaces' were among the most prestigious businesses operated by Black women in the West. Boarding houses were one of the few to obtain substantial white patronage. By 1900 seventy 'hotels' west of the Mississippi were run by blacks, quite a few by women." (17)

Although white temperance leaders, like suffragists, refused to take a stand against southern racial violence, these conditions did not prevent some Black women from participating in temperance campaigning. "Emma Ray's missionary zeal led her into the Women's Christian Temperance Union

in both Washington and Kansas. Naomi Anderson was as active in temperance work in Kansas as she was in suffrage. The California Dry Federation had Sadie Cole of Los Angeles on its executive board and several prominent Black women on the city local unit." (18)

Black women, weary of the false impression that they were wanton, immoral, and socially inferior, started their own social clubs in the West. The effort by women in organizing and developing clubs and lodges did much to make life on the frontier more liveable.

The functions of most Black women's organizations are epitomized by the Sojourner Truth Industrial Club of Los Angeles. Established to provide a home for orphans and unwed women, it trained them in domestic arts and service, and helped them to cultivate "intellectual and moral culture". The club emphasized training in service to build character and promote the dignity of all labor. The lecture, teas, and lessons in needlecraft enabled Black society women to obtain a sense of recognition as community leaders and cultured females. This mixture of homeless girls and elite women served both as "a pioneer in welfare work" and an outlet for the energies of the "grander dames of the ghetto." (19)

Black women were also active in developing religion in the west as Sue Bailey Thurman notes:

"Black women were also founders of several churches in the West. Biddy Mason helped establish and for years was sole support for the first A.M.E. Church in Los Angeles; Clara Brown offered her home to the earliest Methodist Church in Aurora, Colorado. Much of the charity work among Negro poor in the West was done either by religiously motivated Black women or ladies' missionary

associations. By the end of the century, such groups had raised money for the first of several homes for the aged or working girls that Black churches would support in California. In some cities, benevolent or literary societies were also established as early as the 1850's." (20)

However distinguished Black women may have become, they received virtually no recognition for the accomplishment from whites. They could not escape a white attitude of indifference and a stigma of inferiority which restricted their opportunities and ignored their accomplishments. In their quest for white collar jobs, access to public facilities, and social respect western Black women repeatedly found themselves judged by their color rather than their abilities.

Yes, Black women were there! Her roots were spread throughout the West like the roots of a tree. She played an active part in its taming, its development and its history. Her roles in the West were as numerous and as separate as the spots on a leopard.

Some of the more trenchant Black women of the West were:

Mary Ellen (Mammy) Pleasant--San Francisco

Mary Ellen was born a slave, but married into wealth. After her husband's death she operated boarding houses, invested in mining stock, and loaned money at high interest. In San Francisco she filed an early suit for access to streetcars, assisted runaway slaves and allegedly helped fund the Atheneum Institute, a cultural and civic center. (21) It is also said that she furnished John Brown with funds for his raid on Harper Ferry. Mary Ellen had access to many powerful figures.

Tish (Aunt Tish) Nevins--Montana.

Like Mary Ellen, Tish was born a slave and also operated a well known boarding house. Tish was born June 2, 1862 on the Nevins farm in Monroe County. She grew up with an appreciation of "proper" language and literature, although she never learned to read and write. She employed many poor young people in her boarding house and besides paying them a salary, she bought them clothes and insisted that they go to school. Tish became a fabulous cook of international reputation and a personality legend in her time.

Mary Fields--Cascade, Montana.

Mary, who was over six feet tall and weighed in excess of 200 pounds, is a legend. She was proud, independent and afraid of no one. She was a stagecoach driver for eight years and a crack shot. When she died in 1914, the whole town mourned her passing. (22)

Millie Ringgold--Montana

Millie was a former slave who migrated to Fort Shaw, Montana and worked as a servant. She save eighteen hundred dollars and invested her savings into several mining claims. She worked her claims, doing all the digging, blasting and construction of ditches.

Clara (Aunt) Brown--Denver, Colorado

Clara Brown, born a slave in Virginia, was known as Aunt Clara. When she migrated west in 1859 she opened the territory's first laundry, and became the first Black resident of Colorado. By the late 1860's she had acquired houses or lots in five Colorado towns and had gained a reputation for religious work and philanthropy. She died in 1877 in her '80s. She was buried with honors by the Colorado Pioneers Association of which she was a member. Her chair was dedicated in 1932 at Central City Opera House, a tribute to her charitable works. (23)



Mattie Bell--Montana.

Mattie was born a slave who in 1876 migrated from North Carolina To Fort Benton, Montana, where she operated a laundry. She married John Castner, an early white settler, of Belt, Montana. They built a log cabin at Belt, which became a station for the Great Falls-Lewistown Stage. The station grew into a hotel and store and the Castners ultimately owned two thousand acres of farm land by homesteading surrounding land.

Sarah Gammon--Montana

Sarah also married an early white settler, Stephen Bickford. Together they purchased two-thirds of a water system which supplied the drinking water to Virginia City. They expanded the system by substituting iron pipes for wooden logs, providing running water and indoor plumbing. This expanded system was the first in Montana. When her husband died in 1900, she acquired two fresh water springs and constructed a reservoir. Although most of her energy was devoted to the Virginia City Water Company, which she single-handedly operated, she also purchased many of the older buildings in Virginia for historic preservation. She died in 1931. (24)

Biddy Mason--Los Angeles

Biddy and her family were held slaves in San Bernadino, California, from 1851 to 1854. They came to the state with their master from Hancock County, Georgia, by ox team. Biddy drove the livestock across the plains into California while caring for her own and her mistress's children. Following her successful suit for freedom, she worked for a Los Angeles physician as a midwife and nurse, and at his suggestion, invested \$250 in what became the downtown business district. By 1896, her total estate was estimated at \$300,000. She also gained fame for her philanthropic work and support of the first African-Methodist Episcopal Church. (25)

Elizabeth Thorn Scott--Sacramento.

Elizabeth was born in New York City and educated in New Bedford, Massachusetts. She and her husband came to San Francisco during the gold rush. They both were free born and well educated. After being widowed she moved to Sacramento, where in 1854 she opened a private school with fourteen students in her own home. This was the first school for Black youths. Mrs. Scott married again and moved to Oakland, California and opened the first Black school there. (26)

Alice Rowan Johnson--Los Angeles

Alice was also a teacher. A native Californian she graduated from the State Normal School, located in Los Angeles, in 1888. She ranked very high in her class of sixteen.

Kate Bradley Stovall--Los Angeles.

Born in Austin, Texas, Kate graduated from Commercial High School in Los Angeles in 1903. She married, had two children and was very much interested in fraternal, religious, and secular affairs. When the Los Angeles Daily Times published a Lincoln Edition of their paper February 12, 1909, it also included the history of Black people living in that city at the time. The Black women were given a full page, which was edited by Kate. She organized the "Southern California Alumni Association" in 1909, and served that body as its president for four years until she became ill. She died at the age of thirty.

Madam Sul-Te-Wan (Nellie Conley)--  
Los Angeles

Nellie was born in 1874 and as a child often delivered laundry to her mother's customers, two of whom were white actresses who took an interest in coaching Nellie in singing and dancing. Madam Sul-Te-Wan organized a highly successful theatrical touring group known as the Black Four Hundred with the aid of a then famous actress, Fannie Davenport. Alone, with three children, Madam Sul-Te-Wan appealed

to the General Manager of the Fine Arts Film Company for a bit part in The Birth of a Nation. Recognizing her outstanding acting ability, D.W. Griffith gave her a part. After the film was finished, she was discharged by the company for allegedly stealing a book from a white actress and inciting Blacks to protest the showing of The Birth of a Nation in the Los Angeles area.

She was rehired after her successful court fight. Madam Sul-Te-Wan became one of the few Blacks to be an accomplished actress prior to the 1920's. (27)

Jane James--Utah

Jane and her husband were members of the Latter-Day-Saints. They left Nauvoo with other Saints early in 1846 and in 1847 they traveled to Utah. Issac and Jane James had six children, owned a land claim and home and livestock. The settlement of the James family provided Utah with a free Black population from its beginning in 1847.

Charlotte Brown--San Francisco

Charlotte was a free woman and excellent seamstress in Baltimore who saved her earnings to free her husband, James Brown. Charlotte and James went to San Francisco where she was an active leader in the social, cultural and political affairs. Charlotte had two daughters, Mary Ann and Charlotte. The younger and namesake of her mother was to follow in her mothers' footsteps by becoming directly responsible for winning the civil rights case for Blacks to ride the streetcars in San Francisco. (28)

Susan Boyd Bray Waller--Lawrence, Kansas

Susan Bray was an outspoken, articulate, forceful, well educated suffragist. As a widow with two children she met and married John Lewis Waller, an aspiring politician, and moved to Kansas. She assisted his political career by broadening his contacts and planning various campaigns. In 1891 John was appointed to the United Nations as consul to Madagascar. Upon retiring in 1894, John obtained a huge land

grant from the Madagascar government with which John and Susan hoped to establish a vast plantation in a non-white, under-developed region of the globe that would simultaneously serve as a vehicle for their own ambitions and a haven for other oppressed but upwardly mobile Afro-Americans. Viewing Waller's plans for a Black Utopia as a threat to their government, French authorities in Madagascar arrested Waller and sentenced him to twenty years in prison. Susan spent long hours pressuring the U.S. government for his release. President Cleveland's administration secured his release, but he had to give up his land. (29)

Mary Sampson Leary Langston--Kansas

Mary attended Oberlin College, where she married Lewis Sheridan Leary, a saddle and harnessmaker who knew John Brown, the abolitionist. Leary died in action, one of five Blacks known to have fought with Brown. Mary then married Charles Langston, who had been indicted, convicted, and sent to jail for breaking the Fugitive Slave Law. He was active in the Oberlin Station of the Underground Railway. In 1870, Mary and Charles migrated to Kansas where they operated a farm and grocery store. Mary was later to become the proud maternal grandmother of James Langston Hughes, a famous poet, novelist, playwright, biographer, lyricist, librettist, editor, columnist and lecturer of the Harlem Renaissance Era.(30)

Dorothy Cron Grover said that the woman on the frontier has been accorded the most respectable position because she valued herself; after all she was the mother of the West, and thus a complex, realistic woman, self-reliant, who spoke for equal rights in a male dominated society. She was a very gallant figure. Although Ms. Grover was not referring to Black women of the West, we believe and agree with what was said about the white women of the west. We also feel that the Black women should be accorded these tributes.

Sojourner Truth's (Ain't I a Woman) spiritual sisters and daughters of the West were survivors. Although they did not carry the dual burden of "Jim Crow"



and "Jane Crow" graciously, they did carry it effectively. Despite all of the injustices leveled against them they were able to assert their human qualities, and to express their individual talents. They also shared with their men a partnership in a pioneer life on spiritual and psychological frontiers not inhabited by any other group in the United States.

In many ways the western spiritual sisters and daughters of Sojourner Truth were exceptional and represented a higher degree of initiative, aggressiveness and tenacity than most Americans, Black or white. Yet life for the Black women of the West wasn't "no crystal stair." (31)

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**FRONTIER WOMEN: THE TRANS-MISSISSIPPI  
WEST, 1840-1880.**

by Julie Roy Jeffrey  
(New York: Hill & Wang, 1979)

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Reviewed by Courtney Ann Vaughn

Modern scholars, such as Richard Hofstadter, refute Frederick Jackson Turner's claim that the American frontier provided all people an equal chance for economic success. Hofstadter states that only whites who could afford the trip and the initial cost of creating a farming enterprise ever benefited from moving west. Julie Jeffrey, associate professor of history and director of historic preservation at Goucher College, also accepts that the average emigrant was middle-class, but, contrary to many historians, she further contends that the westward movement did not liberate those nineteenth century women who were financially able to migrate. In her book Frontier Women: The Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-1880, Jeffrey maintains that, much to her disappointment, frontier life had a stifling effect on fledgling feminist ideas. Consequently, her work not only is an important historical contribution, but also provides perspectives for contemporary women's rights advocates.

Jeffrey supports her thesis through diaries, newspapers, and court records in which she discovers that rural and urban pioneer women adhered tenaciously to a male dominated

society. They left the security of northern or southern traditional female roles only because their husbands insisted on moving, Jeffrey assesses. After enduring a grueling trek, they dug latrines and built homes; yet the women usually did not demand social power that equaled their responsibilities because, Jeffrey explains, such changes would only perpetuate working double time, within and outside the home.

Expanding further on her theme, the author analyzes two other groups who willingly accepted positions subordinate to those of men. Mormon women of Utah, usually hailing from a low socio-economic class, accepted the responsibility for procreating through polygamous marriage and acquiesced to their religion's contention that the female was man's spiritual inferior. Neither were school teachers the harbingers of progressive thought. Instead they pictured themselves as humble public servants whose purpose was to perpetuate morality and "civilized manners." Prostitutes, Jeffrey notes, presented the only feminine challenges to the homemakers' mission. The author recounts numerous incidents in which groups of females attempted to drive their "fallen" sisters from a settlement or town.

Consistent with her revisionist contentions, Jeffrey argues that western enfranchisement of both sexes and the existence of coeducational colleges do not mean that women fought for and succeeded in a new national political status. The author found few people like suffragette Abigail Scott Duniway, who said her experiences "brought me before the world as an evangel of Equal Rights for Women." Rather, Jeffrey holds, jurisdictions such as Wyoming or Utah allowed women's suffrage in 1869 and 1870, respectively, because each territory's established order needed support. For instance, Jeffrey writes, Mormons hoped to enfranchise members of their own faith and thereby continue to control the business interests and morality laws of Utah. Similarly, Wyoming politicians

hoped that granting women the vote would give the territory a respectable image and counteract the disruptive influence of the transient population that railroad-building attracted, the author surmises.

Jeffrey's conclusions are stunning, but to determine whether or not they apply to the Indian, Black, Oriental, and non-Mormon lower-class women who eventually became part of western society, scholars must produce more research. Despite the incomplete evidence that western settlement affected all females in the same manner, Frontier Women forces today's feminists to realize that many modern women consider second-class citizenship a fair price to pay for men's support and protection from an often-times cruel world. Economic necessity has forced millions to abandon their homemaker role, enter the labor force, and get paid half of what the male counterparts earn; yet many of these sisters view women's rights not as an opportunity for economic and political power, but as a threat to the dream that they might one day bask in languor and luxury.





*"An Idle Hour - Piegan", Edward Curtis from "Portraits from North American Indian Life."*



Excerpted From: The Roads They  
Made: Women in Illinois History

by Adade Mitchell Wheeler  
with Marlene Stein Wortman

Indian women knew how to survive in the wilderness; better yet, they had the skills to make life pleasant, even comfortable. Therefore they made useful wives for the frontier men. Considering the hazards of the Illinois frontier, such a helpmeet would seem not only desirable but indispensable. And while some white men found Indian women "ugly," others reported them as "good-looking," and some, especially half-breeds, were described as "beautiful." By marrying an Indian woman, a man could be clothed, the results of his hunting made palatable, his shelter assured; he would have the best care available if he became ill and in addition would enjoy protection when Indians were on the warpath

against whites. There is much evidence that Indian women were loyal and loving. What more could he ask? Indian women were one of the greatest assets the white man had in the wilderness.

Although each of the various tribes in Illinois had its own customs and ceremonies, it is possible to summarize the division of labor. While the men did the hunting and fought to protect the tribe, women were the producers, a role similar to that of white women in preindustrial Europe and colonial America. But in white society women only helped in the fields while Indian women took primary responsibility for agricultural production. All accounts picture her as seldom idle, very industrious--a regular Puritan of the wilderness.

Women's work varied with the seasons. They were responsible for

planting and hoeing the gardens of wheat or corn, squash, melons and beans. They gathered the wood needed for fires and tended them, brought water, built the shelter. When the tribe moved the women dismantled the cabins or tepees, carrying them on their backs.

During harvest time, they gathered the wheat, if that were the main crop, and threshed it. They had ways of roasting or boiling and drying the wheat to preserve it. If corn were the staple, they husked and ground it. They also dried pumpkins, gathered berries and nuts, found many roots which they knew how to cook, and picked and prepared herbs for medicinal use. The bounty of the hunt was theirs to prepare; they were the butchers and cooks for the feast and the preservers of meat for the future. They readied the skins for use, made clothing from the skins, often decorating it with ribbons, porcupine quills, tufts of dyed deer hair or even elaborate and lovely beadwork; they were artists.

In northwest Illinois, Indian women worked the mines and the crude smelters which the Indians owned. The wife of one Indian chief, Peosta, struck a lode of lead which helped her group occupy that region. Again the women were doing what the whites considered their work, while the "braves looked on." But the white men continued to use the women as miners when they took over; they really were in no position to criticize the Indians for over-working women.

From the evidence of captives who lived with Indians, the women did not protest the demands made upon them. They worked cheerfully. There are stories of their helping each other, sharing their meager food supplies--even with the whites. Jennison, an Englishman who was captured by the Indians, felt that the women's labor was "not severe." Their jobs, he wrote, were no harder than those of white women, and their cares "not half so numerous nor as great." They could work "as they please...in a leisurely fashion...many of the skills of the colonial women were not known, so not

practiced." This he felt was the reason why some women captives were so willing to stay with the Indians.

Indian women seemed to have important status and roles other than just work, marriage and childbearing, but roles which were directly related to their feminine nature and to the form of their work. Since they planted and harvested the crops, it was understood that they owned the land. This is evident in treaty making sessions between Indians and whites. When Tecumseh came to Vincennes to prove his land claims to the Shawnee area of southern Illinois, he brought women with him to help prove his rights. In 1824, Blackhawk also tried to make this point. At the last meeting with General Gaines, a woman who said she was the granddaughter of a chief testified that "the men could not sell the cornfields because they belonged to the women." If the men had sold the land, they would have told the women, she continued. They had not done so; the cornfields were still theirs. The tragedy of the Indians' effort to the whites comes through in this effort of the women to back up the men.

The Indians recognized that since men were warriors, women could be more effective in making and keeping peace. The Shawnees, for instance, appointed female chiefs whose main duty was to prevent unnecessary bloodshed. If a war chief was bent on a war that other chiefs did not want, the woman peace chief could talk him out of it. She would appeal to his better nature, showing him what a war would mean to the women and children in pain and suffering. This was a last resort, but it seldom failed. Indian women apparently had real influence in tribal decision making.

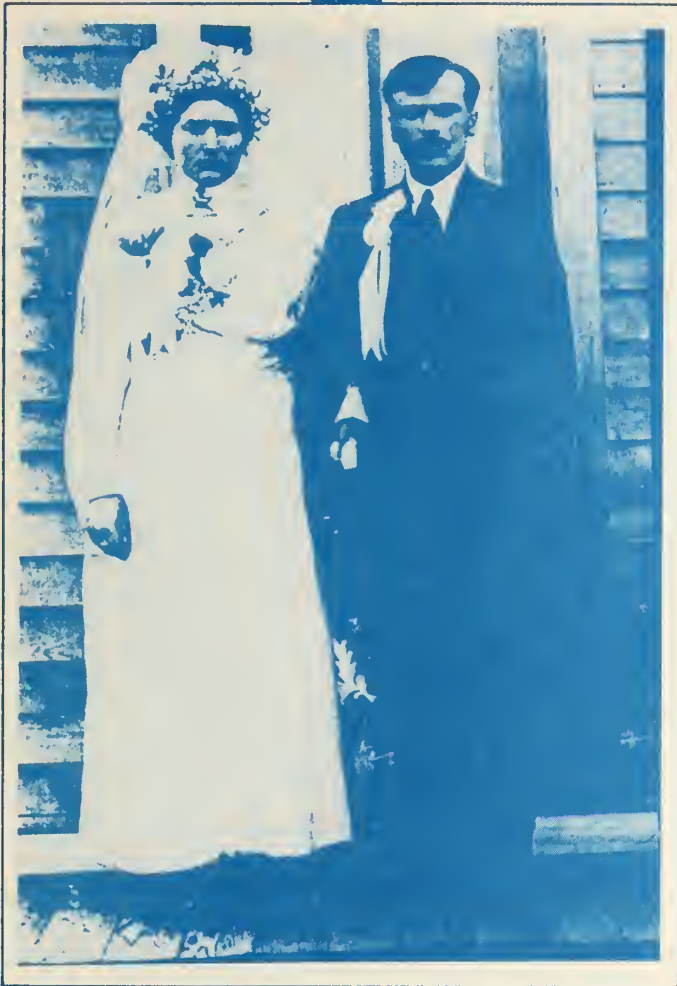
Thus did the Indian women face the whites as the frontier moved west. At times these women were able to temper or even to ward off some of the hostility and cruelty of both white and Indian males. It has been suggested that this is one reason that the Indian women have found their way into white history.

(excerpted from chapter 1 with permission)



## MARRIAGE IN EARLY UTAH: PATTERN AND PATCHWORK

by Maureen Ursenbach Beecher



Photograph from "A Harvest Yet to Reap."

Social history, the history of women in Utah in particular, is in the patchwork stage of its development. Historians studying women and the circumstances of their lives have assembled some impressive and significant patches, but we are far from being able to put the whole into a meaningful configuration. As I scoured the literature for insights into marriage patterns, even in the broader context of America as a whole, I discovered that we know very little about the actual dynamics of marriage in the nineteenth century, that period which provides us with our nearest roots.

There are some splendid patches, however, ready to fit into some sort of pattern, and educated guessing might make them applicable to our immediate concern. Take, for instance, the 1973 study of Robert V. Wells who compared some vital events in the lives of women in early America. Such simple data as dates of birth, marriage, births of children, and death help to form a picture of differing patterns of marital experience. In comparing three groups of women--one group born before 1786, a second group born between 1880 and 1889, and a more recent group born between 1920 and 1929--Wells discovered an emerging trend which might well be expected to continue to our time, with implications for our experience and expectations.

Wells observed from his data that, though the average age at marriage never varied more than a year, women in the 1880's group could expect to spend the next forty years after marriage rearing children, while the 1920's group would spend only thirty-one years. The first group would be bearing children over a period of 17½ years, the last group only 9.7 years. The first group of women would, on the average, lose a spouse before the children were raised, leaving them as single parents for nearly ten years. Couples in this century would, on the other hand, share 12½ years together after their last child had left home. The expectations with which we approach marriage and lifespan planning, then, are obviously far different than those which would have faced our foremothers.

Demographic historians such as Wells are making inroads into the maze of records which might guide us in assembling a pattern of marriage and family life for our study of Utah in the period between 1847 and 1979. Dean May and associates are measuring fertility among this same population; and Phillip Kunz and James Smith are studying plural marriages in the same way.

Social historians are drawing on the findings of the demographers before the ink dries on their published results, and men like Leonard Arrington and Davis Bitton and women like Jill Mulvey Derr and Vicky Burgess-Olsen are helping us see what it all meant. But mostly they are asking questions. All in all, we're discovering that Utahans, whatever distinguishing features they might have or whatever groups with which they may be aligned, are for all that--mainstream Americans, and that the overviews of historians like John Demos make as much sense for Utah as the East. But we're all just beginners. The history of marriage and the family in America as in Utah, is in its early stages.

Realizing, then, that it is too soon to expect definitive studies of marriage patterns in nineteenth century Utah, let's look instead for some pieces, quilt blocks, if you will, which will eventually fit the whole. I propose to look at three marriages and make observations about the conditions of life in nineteenth century America and the impact of those conditions on marriage.

When Martha Jane Knowlton Coray died in 1881, the Woman's Exponent eulogized her thus:

Very Early in life she evinced a character in a degree somewhat rare for one of her sex--that is of decidedly doing her own thinking.

That tells a lot about Martha Jane Coray; it tells even more about the image of women during the 1800's, when a woman's magazine edited by one of the brightest, most forward-thinking conservative feminists of her time should suggest the quality of independent thought as being "rare" for a woman. But let's return to Martha Jane Coray, whose story begins before 1847 across the Great Plains from Utah. We can best get at it through the diary of husband-to-be, Howard Coray.

Howard Coray came as a young man, newly converted, to Nauvoo, Illinois, the center of Mormon activities at that time. There he became clerk to the prophet Joseph Smith. Joseph was a very active man, fond of a good scuffle now and again. Returning home one afternoon with young Howard, Joseph expressed his wish that his clerk appeared a bit heavier than he and that they could have a match. The challenge was too much for Howard; his 130 pounds to Joseph's 200 seemed no problem when his manhood felt threatened. They squared off, and at the first fall, Howard felt the scrunch of pain. His leg was broken. The Prophet carried the young man home, tended to his care, and dropped by several times to see to his wellbeing. On one of those visits he asked sympathetically if there were anything more he could do. Howard suggested a blessing might be in order. From Howard's reminiscence we read:

He said no more for a minute or so, meanwhile looking very earnestly at me; then said: "Brother Coray, you will soon find a companion, one that will be suited to your condition, and whom you will be satisfied with. She will cling to you like the cords of death; and you will have a good many children." He also said some other things which I can't so distinctly remember.

Subsequent some three or four weeks while at meeting the blessing of the Prophet came to my mind. So I thought I would take a square look at the congregation, and see who there was; that...possibly the fair one promised me might be present. After looking a while at the audience my eyes settled upon a young lady...She was an entire stranger to me, and a resident of some other place. I concluded to approach near enough to her to scan her features well. ...She had dark brown eyes, very bright and penetrating; at least they penetrated me.



Howard Coray's account of this first impression suggests what the social historians have been telling us--that however practical the other reasons for marriage might have been (the need for family as part of the social order; the economic dependence of women; the need of a man for a good wife and helpmate; the dowry which might come with her), the first cause in marriage continued to be, as it had been since the colonial period, romantic love. And, in this case, love at first sight. Howard goes on, relating how he wangled from a mutual friend an introduction to the young lady:

I discovered at once that she was ready, off-hand, and inclined to be witty; also, that her mind took a wider range than was common for young ladies of her age...I said to myself, she will do; the fact is, I was decidedly struck.

The respect Howard had for Martha Jane's mind set a pattern for their marriage. Soon after their wedding, they were both teaching school in Nauvoo, Martha Jane often carrying on alone as Howard was called on repeated missions for his church. It was there that they together compiled Mother Lucy Mack Smith's recollections of her family into a book that is presently going into yet another printing. That task was initially Martha Jane's, but it is significant that, as Howard notes:

I was requested also to drop the school...and help her in the matter of the history. After consulting Pres. Young, who advised me to do so, I consented; and immediately set to with my might. We labored together until the work was accomplished...

A man's following his wife into a task which she had initiated seems out of the ordinary. Certainly it does not fit with the generalizations of family historians who describe the accepted role of women as, among

other things, subservient. The pattern for the Corays, however, seems to have been set: each would do whatever task presented itself without regard to the usual sex role stereotypes. While camping on the Nishnabotna, for instance, on their way to Utah, Howard farmed and Martha "tended ferry" for passing emigrants. Children arrived in the family with regularity, and, surprisingly for the time, all twelve survived to adulthood. By the time the family was finally settled in Utah with a home in Provo and a farm near Mona in Juab County, the division of labor had evened itself out. Although Martha's diary once read "Washed forenoon, plowed afternoon," the days more often found her doing the more typically female tasks indoors, Howard the more usual masculine work, outdoors. The adjustment seems to have been satisfactory to both; even reading between the lines of Martha's sparse daily entries, I find no evidence of friction. Of course, that could suggest simply an easy working arrangement--my marriage counselor friend remarked to me that often the positive bonds that hold a new marriage together disintegrate into negative bonds as the marriage matures--but there is no evidence in the diary to either support or refute that conclusion here. Martha Jane went on to supplement the family income by practicing law (on a para-legal basis, I'm sure), teaching school, distilling herbs for linaments, and eventually serving on the Board of Trustees of the newly founded Brigham Young University (though I doubt that she was recompensed monetarily for that one). In any case, the adjustment seems to have worked well, as far as work loads were concerned.

And the bonding seems to have held. When she fell ill, Martha's husband recorded that

She had been afflicted several years with a cough, which had now become so bad, that I thought it best to come to Provo, where I could take better care of her than was possible on the farm

in (Mona); but, with all that care and medicine could do, she left us--she lingered till December 14th, 1881, when her spirit took its flight.

That reads to me like the concern of a man for someone more to him than a partner in the business of family support. But then I could be wrong.

One feels an inevitable insecurity making judgments about a person, a marriage, from the participant's own account. And in the case of this next family, I am doubly troubled, because my view of the woman, whose autobiography I have studied, differs in some aspects from the view of her youngest son, who edited the manuscript. I know the work only as a piece of literature, the woman only as her words reveal her. But with that hedge, let me suggest some aspects of another marriage.

I speak of Annie Clark Tanner, whose restrained yet deeply soul-searing autobiography is available in print under the title A Mormon Mother. Born to a polygamous family in Farmington, Annie knew what she herself would find in entering a plural marriage. Or thought she knew.

When Annie accepted the proposal of Joseph Marion Tanner, a dashing young intellectual who had been her teacher at BYU, she realized that their marriage would have to be secret. He already had one wife, and the year was 1883, when what was then termed "illegal cohabitation" was punishable by imprisonment. Annie's own account of the wedding night will suggest the tensions which marred her marriage from the outset.

After the ceremony, Mr. Tanner and Aunt Jennie, as we familiarly called the first wife, and I took the northbound train. I got off at Farmington and they went on to Ogden. I do not recall any conversation while on the train. Perhaps the feelings of

Aunt Jennie accounted for the silence.

It was dark when the train arrived home and my brother Wilford was at the depot. I remember of being so glad that some member of the family was there at the station to meet me. I recall now of feeling, as I entered (the dear old home), that I was glad to be safely there and free, for a while at least, of all the uncertainty that the future might bring.

Mary Elizabeth gave me a hearty welcome with the question, "Did it happen?" She and the others were satisfied with my answer when I cheerfully replied, "Ask me no questions."

The family had finished the evening meal. As I sat down to a glass of milk and bread the thought came to me. "Well, this is my wedding supper." In those few minutes I recalled the elaborate marriage festivals which had taken place in our own family, of the banquets I had helped to prepare and the many lovely brides among my friends. I even began to compare their wedding gowns. I was conscious of the obscurity of my own first evening after marriage. "What a contrast," I said to myself. "No one will ever congratulate me." Yet I was sure I had taken the right step and recall feeling confident that something really worthwhile had been accomplished. Finally I broke the silence.

"The experience wasn't half bad."

"You haven't half begun yet," father replied.

I realized the truthfulness of his remark two weeks later, when Mr. Tanner failed to keep his appointment to come to see me. I was so disappointed that it seemed to me that the very



angels wept with me.

Annie had married Joseph Marion Tanner, I believe, for the beauty of his mind. She makes reference to her hopes for the education her children would receive at his hand, for the rich intellectual tone he would bring to their home. At one time he was president of Brigham Young College here in Logan, and after a period of study in law at Harvard, he was appointed president of the Agricultural College, the present Utah State University. Annie had a right, it would seem, to expect the best of him for her children. But there was trouble in the marriage, which, however closely one reads the book, remains more or less obscure, hidden in part at least by Annie's conscious care not to speak ill of her children's father.

There is in marriage counselling a principle of "least interest." It suggests that the person who has the least to lose in a given situation has the greater power. Certainly Annie was in most cases at a disadvantage. Dependent on Marion for sustenance, for affection, for status--whatever she could obtain under laws which declared her an illegal wife, her children legally illegitimate--and for the intellectual stimulation which had been her aphrodisiac, she would always be in a position of little power. But on one occasion she resorted, not to the obvious sort of manipulation, but to a use of covert power. Marion had gone to Cambridge with the promise that Annie could follow for the second year of his stay there. Hungry for the high culture which Harvard University represented, as well as for Marion himself, she prepared eagerly for the trip.

My trunk was packed. I had even dried corn and picked, stewed and dried on earthen plates some native black currants, because I knew they were Mr. Tanner's favorite fruit. But....  
The day before our train was to

leave, a letter came from Mr. Tanner saying it would be better, all around, if I gave up my trip to the East now. I said nothing to anyone about the letter, but went on with my plans and was soon on an eastward bound train.

But in spite of this show of willful determination, the marriage seemed doomed to failure from the beginning. The stoic silence with which Annie controls herself is excruciating in this description of the end of her marriage:

One Sunday morning as my husband and I stood on the front porch of our home together, he informed me that he would not come to Farmington to see us any more. There had been no previous differences between us except the children's education to which no reference had recently been made, so the statement was a great shock to me at the time. Inwardly, I felt impelled to persuade him otherwise, and I was sure he had expected me to. I nevertheless controlled myself and made no response to his far-reaching decision. My silence at the moment was not an easy thing.

There is a postscript to the marriage which I feel is significant. Overt Tanner, Annie and Marion's youngest son, in his introduction to the book called his mother's life "a tragedy." I cannot agree. There is in her response to her life, with all its disappointments, a greatness which is tempered by those very sorrows. She recognized it. Her comment at the time of Marion's announcement reads:

I am aware now that the years of the preceding struggle to live polygamy had all helped to steel me for whatever may come. I thought in those few moments before he departed: "I'll be equal to whatever must come."

In the most exalted sense, Annie became for her children the father she thought she had given them. And in the becoming, transcended the woman she would otherwise have been.

John Demos, outlining the history of the family in America, wrote of our period that "it is hard...to avoid seeing the nineteenth century as a time of troubles--not to say tragedy--in the history of the family. Sex-role typing, the generation gap, a guilt-laden sense of domestic responsibility, tortured attitudes toward sexuality--the total situation was hardly a benevolent one." Certainly it is easy to see examples of all of those problems in Utah marriages of the past century.

But there were in the nineteenth century, despite its Victorian strictures against warmth and genuineness in human relations, some marriages--perhaps many--which did achieve deeper levels of support and communication. One such marriage was that of Uriah J. Wenner and his wife Kate. Aristocratic in her New England upbringing, Kate was educated in the Moravian Seminary, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Christian in her faith, she married "the man God made and kept for me." Obviously herself in love of the most romantic kind, she reported her husband's similar feelings: "His first words were, 'Is there anybody else? If so, breathe the answer softly so as not to disturb the ashes of a deeply buried happiness.'"

There was a short engagement, a wedding, and a honeymoon ending in Salt Lake City, where her husband opened a law office. The young couple built a home on Brigham Street and settled into the marital and social life of the city. Not Mormons, still they found themselves enjoying, and being enjoyed by, their LDS neighbors. In a delightful departure from the usual modesty of nineteenth century diarists, Kate recorded a small moment of their married life:

The second year, George V arrived and was a few months old when the big social event of the winter was the opening of Mrs. Kimball's new home on Main Street. I had been secretly holding for this occasion a beautiful gown my mother had sent me from the East. When I burst forth in this finery and heard those things dear to the heart of every wife--we never went to that party. I was addressed as Miss G. (Her maiden name) and courted all over again, and our baby asleep smiled his benediction.

It speaks hopefully for the loosening of unnatural strictures to read the response of the hostess, Mrs. Kimball, the older lady whose mothering would have been done during the height of Victorian prudery. Kate wrote:

The next day I made honest confession to my hostess and she put her arms around me and said, "God bless you for your love and truth."

Two children had been born to the Wenners when, in the fifth year of their marriage, they learned of Uriah's tuberculosis. (Kate says "my husband was not so well," an apparent euphemism necessary, even at the time of writing, several years later, to buffer the severity of the disease.) Perfect rest was prescribed, so the Wenners sold the law practice and the city home and bought a few sheep and several acres on Fremont Island in Great Salt Lake. "I felt like a real frontier woman," wrote Kate. "Homesteading. I loved the sound of it. Relatives and friends were horrified at our desolate summer on a desert island. My heart was beating health, health for him."

The summer was to be a trial run. We tried to think of everything we would need for camping and tent life. We arranged for an old sail boat to carry us over. I thought of the Ark as we marched in two by two, the little boy and girl, age four and two years, two men, the hired girl, and captain, as he called himself.



The trip somehow took the Weners three days--calms, head winds, squalls, and seasickness made the voyage treacherous. It is not surprising that Kate resolved, however whimsically, that before she would return to the mainland, she "perhaps would wait until the lake dried up."

The life they created was an idyll out of the pastoral tradition. Their sheep prospered; monthly mail from the mainland kept them informed of, but not inhibited by civilization's march. "Time slipped by so pleasantly that months slipped into years." The children--a third child had joined the family by now--were saved from all the usual diseases. (On their one trip to the mainland, their grandfather asked one of the children if she had had whooping cough, an epidemic of which was in progress. Replied little Blanche, "Grandpa, I think we had all the diseases except Polygamy before we went to the island.")

Typical of Kate's account of their life on the island is this moment:

One of our favorite walks after the evening meal was to Sunset Rock, and as the brilliant colors of the sky faded, my brave husband, who then was struggling with his health unbeknownst to me, would repeat: "God's in his Heaven--All's right with the world!"

The inevitable day came. Kate wrote, remembering:

Just once I realized things might change. I thought my husband was taking a nap, when from the other room I heard him softly saying, "In my Father's house are many mansions." I ran to the shore where the children were playing to gain strength to fight my own anxiety and to catch their cheer and sunshine for him. That night I awakened many times wishing the wind would go down. Next morning, busy (about the house) I heard him call and the voice sounded far away and between the upstairs

and the downstairs, I knew, oh, I knew!

With these words, "I love you, love the children," he left the island. There I stood alone facing death for the first time in all my life; the three little children were on a faraway hill, happy in their play...I met them and explained as best I could. Did anyone ever stop the laughter and halt the happiness of little children? It takes something from one that never comes back.

The burial seemed best conducted out of the children's sight. Kate wrote:

I sent my children to a faraway beach for pebbles, and told them when they saw their flag at the upstairs window to come home. When all was over they came and with these beautiful pebbles of all colors we each made a letter and spelled the word LOVE on the newly made grave.

The sense is akin to the feeling expressed by Bathsheba Smith at the death of her husband: "he was gone, my light, my sun, my life, my joy, my lord, yea almost my God. But I must not mourn but prepare myself to meet him." Kate's record ends with a similar upward glance, surely the most convincing proof of the soundness of the marriage relationship:

Then came a shower like sympathy from Heaven and soon a rainbow and the sunshine lit up my world again--the glorious memories of our life and love on that desert island.

So although these are only patches in the social history of women and marriage relationships in America, may we sense the universals in the lives of which these women wrote, feel kinship with them, and extend to women everywhere compassionate understanding and support as we work to understand marriage patterns--or patches thereof--in the present as well as in the past.



Chicago Public Library staff, circa 1895

## RESEARCH GUIDE TO WOMEN IN AMERICAN HISTORY

compiled by Lynn Thomas Strauss

Scholarly books and articles on women in American history are not easy to find because women's papers have not been collected. Only a handful of historians have actually done research in primary materials. (Although this is changing as more and more research continues and new collections continue to be established)

Several of our contributors in writing about women on the frontier confronted the difficult task of research in this field where so few have gone before. Some of our articles represent new contributions to the discovery and recovery of the story of women on the American frontier. I trust this guide and bibliography will aid future researchers and enable them to go even further in uncovering our rich heritage.

### SOURCES

1. Newspapers, periodicals, diaries, journals, collected papers (women's papers may be collected under her husband's name.)
2. State Historical Societies
3. University Archives
4. Special Group Archives (private)

5. Library of Congress; Manuscript Division
6. Church Historical Archives
7. Families and Friends (correspondence, etc.)
8. National Archives in Washington, D.C.-- official records and documents

### LIBRARIES AND WOMEN'S COLLECTIONS

1. Radcliffe College, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on The History of Women in America.

Patricia Miller King, Libn.  
3 James Street, Cambridge, Mass. 02138  
164 personal collections, 24 organizational collections including National Women's Trade Union League Papers, National League of Women Voters Papers, Women's Rights Collection ; now collecting current Women's Liberation Movement.

2. Yale University Library, Manuscripts and Archives

Lawrence Dowler, Assoc. Libn.  
Box 1603 A Yale Sta. New Haven, Conn. 06520  
Audio tapes, videotapes, microforms, primarily non-literary American papers from 18th century to present.

3. Women's History Research Center, Microfilm Library

Laura X, Libn. 2325 Oak St. Berkley, CA. 94708  
Notes, microfilm of collection of Women's periodicals 1956-74 housed at Northwestern University Library, Special Collections Dept. Evanston, Il. 60201 c/o Sarah Sherman

4. University of North Carolina, Greensboro, Walter Clinton Jackson Library

Emile Mills, Special Collections Libn. 1000 Spring Garden St. Greensboro, N.C. 27412  
Includes books printed from 16th century to early 20th. Major authors include Mary Wollstonecroft, Aphra Behn, Mary Astell, Collection is primarily 19th & 20th century non-fiction writers of N.C., also papers of Gertrude Weil; University Archives houses 80 years



- of history of the school, once the largest state supported residential college for women which became co-educational in 1963.
5. Connecticut College, Library  
Brian Rodgers, Librn. Mohegan Ave.  
New London, Conn. 06320
  6. Sophia Smith Collection at Smith College  
Northampton, MA.
  7. University of Colorado Libraries  
Western Historical Collection  
  
Boulder, Colorado 80302  
History of Colorado WCTU organized in 1880 & active in woman's suffrage, prison reform, homes for unwed mothers, day nurseries, 8-hour laws.
  8. Howard University, Moorland-Springain Research Center,  
  
Michael Winston, Dir.  
500 Howard Pl. N.W. Washington, D.C. 20059
  9. University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Love Library, University Archives/Special Collections  
  
Joseph Svoboda, Libn.  
Lincoln, NE, 68588  
The Mari Sandoz Collection, correspondence files, Plains Indians and western American history unpublished manuscripts, authors resource files .
  10. Columbia University, Barnard College Wollman Library  
  
Patricia Ballou, libn.  
Broadway & 117th St. New York, N.Y. 10027  
Includes Bertha Van Riper Overburg Gift Collection of nearly 2000 rare editions of books by American women biographical works, letters and literary manuscripts .
  11. Catalyst  
  
Gurley Turner, Dir. of Information  
14 E. 60th St. New York, N.Y. 10022  
Women, work and careers .
  12. YWCA National Board Library  
  
Elizabeth Norris, libn  
600 Lexington Ave. N.Y. 10022  
Women and their contemporary interests.
  13. Vassar College Library  
  
Frances Goudy, libn.  
Box 20, Poughkeepsie, N.Y. 12601  
Emphases on women's rights, suffrage and ERA, papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Paulina Wright Davis, Maria Mitchell and Alma Lutz.
  14. Winthrop College, Ida Jane Dacus Library  
  
Ron Chepesuik, Libn.  
Rock Hill, S.C. 29733  
Women's history in South Carolina, local history .
  15. California Historical Society Library  
  
Gary Kurutz, Libn. 2099 Pacific Ave.  
San Francisco 94109  
Areas of strength include Gold Rush, overland narratives, Indians, women's history, posters, newspapers, geneology.
  16. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, University of Colorado Libraries, Western Historical Collections,  
  
Boulder, Colorado 80302  
Correspondence & reports on League founded by Jane Addams and European leaders in 1915.
  17. Reminiscences, Oral History Collection  
Columbia University, New York City
  18. Claremont College, Ella Strong Denison Library

Judy Harvey, Libn. Scripps College  
Claremont, CA 91711

Ida Rust Macpherson Collection  
Centers on humanistic accomplish-  
ments of women, suffrage & emanci-  
pation, women in westward movement .

19. Friends Historical Library of  
Swarthmore College

Bernice Nickols, Curator of Peace  
Collections, Swarthmore, PA. 19081  
International arbitration, documents  
of Women's Peace Party 1915-1919,  
American Peace Society 1828-1947,  
World Peace Foundation 1911-  
Hague Peace Conferences of 1899 &  
1907.

20. Brown County Historical Society  
Museum Library

Paul Klammer, Dir.  
27 N. Broadwy, New Ulm, Minn  
56073  
Family files, about 2500 pioneer  
families, incl obituaries,  
pictures, documents, letters.

21. Museum of the American Indian  
Library

Mary B. Davis, Libn.  
Broadwy at 155th St. New York, N.Y.  
10032  
Collection of all aspects of  
Indians of Western hemisphere.

22. Haverford College Library,  
Quaker Collection

23. Judy Chicago's Dinner Party  
Research Materials

Through the Flower Corp.  
P.O. Box 842 Benicia, CA 94510

(For materials emphasizing Illinois  
and Chicago Women's history send for:  
Library Resources For Women's  
Organizations, A Chicago Area Guide  
Compiled for Illinois Women's  
History Week March 2-8, 1980.  
Sponsored by The Illinois Women's  
Agenda, 53 West Jackson Blvd.  
Chicago, Il. 60604. (312) 922-8530 )

#### TEXTS & REFERENCE BOOKS

1. Century of Struggle by Eleanor Flexner  
(1959)
2. History of Woman Suffrage, six volumes  
edited by Elizabeth Cady Stanton &  
Susan B. Anthony & Mathilda Gage  
published Rochester, N.Y., 1881.
3. America Through Women's Eyes by Mary  
R. Beard, N.Y. MacMillan, 1933.
4. The American Woman: Who Was She?  
by Anne Firor Scott, Englewood Cliffs,  
N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971.
5. Up From The Pedestal by Aileen Kraditer  
Chicago: Quadrangle Press, 1968.
6. The American Sisterhood by Wendy Martin  
N.Y. Harper & Row, 1972.
7. The Women in American History by  
Gerda Lerner, Menlo Park, CA:  
Addison-Wesley Publishing Co. 1971.
8. The Report of the President's  
Commission on the Status of Women  
edited by Margaret Mead & others  
Washington, D.C.: Superintendent  
of Documents, 1963.

#### Material in specific areas :

1. Indian Women  
The Indian in America's Past  
by Jack Forbes, Englewood Cliffs,  
N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964.  
Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee  
by Dee Brown, N.Y. Holt,  
Rinehart & Winston, 1970.  
Mountain Wolf Woman, edited by  
Nancy Oestrich Laurie, Ann Arbor,  
MI: U of Mich. Press, 1961.
2. Colonial Women  
The Dear-Bought Heritage  
by Eugenie Andruss Leonard  
Philadelphia: U of Penn. Press,  
1965.  
Daughters of The Promised Land  
by Page Smith, Boston, Little  
Brown & Co. 1970.  
A Little Commonwealth: Family  
Life in Plymouth Colony by  
John Demos, New York: Oxford  
University Press, 1970.  
Career Women of America, 1776-1840  
Elizabeth A. Dexter, Frankestown,  
N.H., M. Jones, 1950.  
Colonial Women of Affairs by  
Elizabeth Dexter, Boston:  
Houghton Mifflin, 1931.



### 3. Frontier Women

"Women and Children on the California-Oregon Trail in the Gold Rush" by Georgia Willis Reed, in Missouri Historical Review, 20 (1944), pp. 175-189.

"Blessed Damozels: Women in American History," by Leonard Arrington in Western History, 50 (spring 1970).

### 4. Black Women

Marriage and Family Among Negroes by Jesse Bernard, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966.

"The Negro Woman and The Search for Equality," by Pauli Murray paper presented at the Leadership Conference of the National Council of Negro Women in Washington, D.C. in 1963.

### 5. Southern Women

The Southern Lady by Anne Firor Scott, Chicago, U of C Press, 1970.  
Bonnet Brigades by Mary Elizabeth Massey, N.Y. Alfred A. Knopf, 1966.

### 6. Women's Education

History of Women's Education in The United States, 2 vols. by Thomas Woody, N.Y. & Lancaster, PA: The Science Press, 1929.

(Material for this guide was gathered from many sources, but most valuable resource books include The Woman Question in American History edited by Barbara Welter, Hinsdale, IL,: The Dryden Press, 1973 and Subject Collections, Fifth Edition, compiled by Lee Ash, N.Y. & London: R.R. Bowker Co., 1978.)





Culver Pictures

*Pioneer settlers in 1887: Eloquent testimony by women who endured floods, Indian raids and plagues of grasshoppers*

Walking with Women Through Chicago History (Salsedo Press, \$3.95) is a new paperback that grew from a bus tour organized during last year's Women's History Week. "There were so many requests for repeats, we decided to put together a book," says Mary Ann Johnson, one of the four historians who divided up the city and retraced the steps of Chicago's most influential women--obscure and famous, past and present.

Johnson, who runs the restored Jane Addams Hull House at the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, devotes her portion of the guide to the Near West Side, Addams' old stomping ground. Other sections cover the Loop, the Prairie Avenue area and Hyde Park. Detailed maps pinpoint the exact locations of women's organizations (both thriving and defunct), statues honoring women, artists' studios, suffragette parade routes, schools, offices, social agencies, factories and mansions (philanthropists and their overworked maidservants both are noted here).

Because so many of the buildings have been replaced, urban adventurers will find this volume more valuable as a guide to the spirit and the mind of women in the past 100 years than as a sightseeing manual, but a working imagination and a sturdy pair of shoes will make the trips worthwhile.

Pioneer Women: Voices From The Kansas Frontier by Joanna L. Stratton (Simon and Schuster, \$16.95) tells the story of the gradual transformation of Kansas from virgin prairie and isolated outposts to cultivated fields and bustling towns. Stratton draws the material for her story of the contributions of women in Kansas history from the uncompleted memoirs of her great-grandmother, Lilla Day Monroe, herself a pioneer.



---

VICTORIAN WOMEN A documentary account of women's lives in nineteenth-century England, France, and the United States. Edited by Erna Olafson Hellerstein, Leslie Parker Hume, and Karen M. Offen. (Stanford University Press, 1981).

Diaries, letters, autobiographies, poems, medical records, wills, tombstone inscriptions, games, household budgets, etiquette manuals, investigative committee reports, and the writings of nineteenth-century social scientists were collected by the three scholars who have produced this enthralling book. Many of the more than 200 documents have never before been published and some have been translated into English for the first time. Arranging their material into four parts reflecting the female life cycle, the editors reveal the life experiences of women in many social classes and cultural settings with an extraordinary vividness.

Of particular interest to students of the American frontier are such entries as: "An American girl goes West with her family", "Death on the American Frontier", "Hard work is the watchword in Kansas", "The cares of two California women", and "Witches, healers, beggars, and outcasts."

This is a volume of impeccable scholarship which makes a significant contribution to the growing fields of Women's Studies and Women's History.



## *Letters to the Creative Woman*

---

Dear Helen,

What a lovely surprise it was to receive a copy of The Creative Woman with a splendid review of my book!

Your magazine obviously fills an important role, and the review itself was the best we have seen. Nickolas Livingston--please give him my thanks--chose a stimulating theme by connecting thoughts in the book with aspirations of novelists and poets and musicians as well as with those of painters.

Please thank all concerned for that fine review. It should help me become the most famous artist on Goose Pond Road, Fairfax, Vermont!

Larry Goldsmith

### **Response to Martin's Letter:**



I agree with you that "internalized oppression" is not the same, conceptually, as "internalized aggression". We believe that if you review the eighteen issues of our quarterly, published since 1977, you will in fairness decide that we are on your side in the larger argument to which you point. We are also outraged when people "blame the victim", and we point out bigotry whenever we encounter it.

We do appreciate your sending us your work and we were glad to print it. It is a valuable contribution to the understanding of the cultural images which complicate our process of liberation as women.

HEH



The  
Loop  
College

64 EAST LAKE STREET, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60601 AREA CODE: 312-269-8000

February 8, 1982

Helen E. Hughes, Editor  
The Creative Woman  
Governors State University  
Park Forest South, IL 60466

Dear Doctor Hughes:

I vigorously protest the use of my name over the article, "The Black Mother: Cultural Images," which appears in the Third World Woman issue of The Creative Woman. In its published form there appear major--and unacceptable--changes from the original.

Specifically, the original essay has been condensed such that its central thrust has been distorted and the essay's meaning become unclear. Now there is not only a misspelling; in some instances, the language of the unauthorized revision is, to the extent that it alters my intended meaning, inaccurate and misleading. For example, I wrote "[Internalized aggression] is a consequence of the victim being unable to act on his or her rage against the oppressor and so turning it in against the self." The published version reads that internalized aggression "is a consequence of the victim's failure to act on his or her rage against the oppressor, so turning it inward against the self." (p. 24) Not so. At this level the victim is not at fault. This revision is a prime example of that infamous racist/sexist technique of "blaming the victim." I am outraged at having been made to appear the author of such.

The publication of this edited version of my article has, I believe, harmed my academic reputation. I am entitled to an apology. Moreover, fairness, if not sisterhood, demands that I be given the opportunity in your next issue to state my objection to the editing.

I await your reply.

In Sisterhood,

*Odette Ewell Martin*

Odette Ewell Martin  
Associate Professor of English

CC: June O Patton, Ph.D.

Women In Buddhism - A Symposium

The effect of the feminist movement in the modern world upon the recently imported Eastern religions has been profoundly felt and will continue to have a transformative influence. In this conference we will examine the effect that modern feminist consciousness has on Buddhism--the 2500 year old path to enlightenment developed by the Indian sage Gautama Shakyamuni. We will also examine what the Buddhist teachings have to say about the role of women in society.

Date: July 1-5, 1982

Place: Naropa Institute, 1111 Pearl St.  
Boulder, CO 80302  
(303) 447-9025

Cost: \$75.00 for conference,  
Housing \$56.00  
(includes 2 meals a day)

Network/Artwork: The International Summer Art Program

This seven-week intensive program will bring together women from the U.S., Europe, Canada, Mexico, Central America, and around the world. The Summer Art Program will include: classes in graphics, video, performance, writing and healing artmaking, community meetings where issues of feminism are addressed, and guest lectures by Los Angeles women artists and activists.

Date: July 6-August 21, 1982

Place: The Woman's Building  
1727 No. Spring St.  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
(213) 221-6161

COST: Tuition for summer \$450

The National Women's Martial Arts Federation - Special Training for Women

Classes in all areas of martial arts instruction, including Chinese Kung Fu systems, Japanese, Okinawan, Korean Karate systems, and Kodokan Judo will be held. These courses will be conducted by many of the top women Black Belts in the U.S.

Date: June 10-13, 1982

Place: Provincetown, MASS.

Cost: \$136.00 (includes food &  
lodging)

For information and registration contact: Ms. Banshee, National Coordinator, Special Training '82 ,  
P.O. Box 945, Provincetown, MA.  
02657. Phone: (617) 487-9623.



## EDITOR'S COLUMN

A celebration of ten  
years:  
Chicago Women  
in Publishing

In 1971 a group of women who worked at Scott Foresman were having lunch and discussing the logic of men making more money than women "because they were the primary bread-winners," an idea that made sense to some of them, but was being questioned by others. Another hot topic was maternity benefits. Someone brought up sexism in textbooks.

At Rand McNally the women who had started to raise such questions were told that they could not meet on company property, so they started meeting in each other's homes.

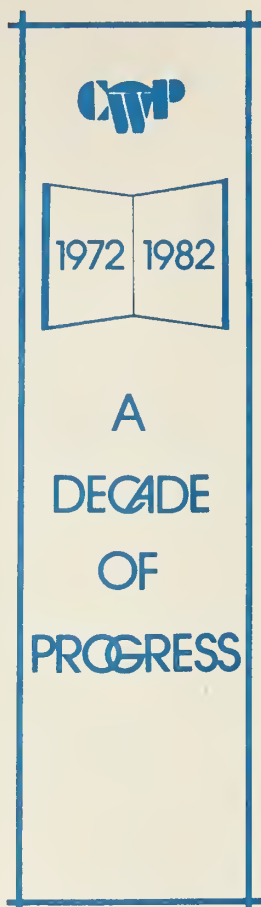
Some of the original founding members were on hand at the American Library Association building on East Huron Street last Friday to reminisce and to assess how far they had come since the founding of CWP. Anne Ladky, now of Women Employed, said that women in publishing have traveled light years in this decade. The guidelines for non-sexist language which they developed have become the official policy of Scott Foresman. "Thank God," said Ladky, "that we didn't know how hard it was! Founding was easier than sustaining." In the process of building this successful organization, independent and solvent, there was always a tension between the movement toward feminist

issues (such as building public support for ERA) and professional development (establishing a network and a directory of successful free-lancers). But Chicago is not supportive of women writers--unless you have a best seller.

The Fair Women, a marvelous book about the Women's Building at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, got a bigger write-up in the Christian Science Monitor and The New York Times than it did in any Chicago newspaper. As we talked and listened, drank champagne and met new friends (and subscribers to The Creative Woman) I thought what an impressive amount of talent was present in that room; remembered that Harriet Monroe had started Poetry magazine here; that two feminist bookstores are making it in our city--Jane Addams Bookstore and Women and Children First. It was a roomful of energetic, ambitious, attractive women dressed for the most part in "executive suite" clothes. Full of ideas, articulately expressed, and ready for controversy. Evelyn Swanson, president of Chicago Women in Publishing, ended her address by quoting Germaine Greer--"Energy is the power that drives every human being. It is not lost by exertion, but maintained by it." That, I decided, deserves to be shared with our readers. The effort itself energizes! We have to keep on keeping on. "Failure is impossible!" It was an evening to lift the spirit, and to mark National Women's History Week.

To join Chicago Women in Publishing, send fifteen dollars to P.O. Box 11837, Chicago, Il. 60611.

HEH





*"The slow ox-teams"*

Drawing by Harold W. Miles, from "Small Flora Ann."





## ERRATA AND ADDENDA

Biographical Data for issue on  
Third World Women:

June O. Patton, Professor of History  
Governors State University  
Park Forest South, Illinois

Odetta Ewell Martin,  
Associate Professor of English  
Loop College  
Chicago, Illinois

Joanne V. Gabbin, Associate  
Professor of English and Literature  
Lincoln University, Lincoln,  
Pennsylvania

Mary Frances Berry, Professor of  
History and Law, Senior Fellow  
Institute For the Study of  
Educational Policy, Howard University  
Washington, D.C.

## CORRECTION

Title of Section I should read:  
WOMEN IN THE THIRD WORLD

Mary Cassatt, detail from mural  
Modern Woman

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